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## THE REINTERMENT OF MAJOR PIERRE CHARLES L'ENFANT.

BY JAMES DUDLEY MORGAN, M.D.

(Report made to the Society, May 11, 1909.)

The Sundry Civil bill of 1908, contained a small clause which read as follows:

“One thousand dollars is made available for the Commissioners of the District of Columbia to remove and render accessible to the public the grave of Major Pierre Charles L'Enfant.”

Congressional action had been sought many times to properly mark the grave of L'Enfant and erect a monument in the capital city; after many fruitless efforts, it was only last year that the members of the Columbia Historical Society, and a few others interested, were able to secure an appropriation; and thus a most fitting and glorious testimonial was given to L'Enfant's genius and patriotism on Wednesday, April 28, 1909.

On April 22, 1909, Commissioner Henry B. F. Macfarland, Dr. James Dudley Morgan, a grandson of William Dudley Digges who befriended L'Enfant, and on whose estate “Green Hill” in Prince George County, Maryland, L'Enfant was buried, Dr. William Tindall, secretary to the commissioners, Mr. George Howard, a grandson of George Riggs, the present owner of “Green Hill,” drove out to the grave of L'Enfant, arrangements having been previously made with the Quartermaster General's Department of the United States Army to exhume the body on that day after the location of the grave had been designated by Dr. Morgan.

It was a lonely and unmarked grave more than six feet in length. A graceful, red cedar, drawing its vigorous life from the very earth which enveloped the ashes of the neglected Frenchman, his sole monument for eighty-four years, swaying and whispering with every breeze, carried the inspiration of his genius into never-ending requiem, while its pungent odor served as perpetual incense. "Nature, more generous than man, had drawn over the lonely mound a mantle of myrtle, like a pall of perennial green."

The work of exhuming the body was done under the direction of D. H. Rhodes, of the Quartermaster General's Department, and of the Commissioners of the District of Columbia. The tall, slender tree which marked the spot where the Franco-American lay, and which had been planted at the head of the grave at the time the body was buried, June 14, 1825, had first to be carefully cut down before the work of transferring the body to a hermetically sealed casket could be begun. A thunder storm interrupted the operations for twenty minutes after the ground had been broken, then the digging of the grave was continued, in silence, for an hour or more. A straight line of black earth, in sharp contrast to the yellow clay the spades had brought up so far, was found at the depth of about four-and-a-half feet. Then the shovel was used carefully, the object being to trace out the line of black earth. As the dirt was cautiously removed, the outlines of the coffin became discernible. The shape was so marked as to prove to onlookers that the resting place of Major L'Enfant had been found. As the party stood with uncovered heads around the excavation, the transfer of the remains of the famous engineer was begun. A cardinal bird, sitting in a near-by tree, sang almost continuously during the work at the grave. Following the sealing

of the casket, it was wrapped in "Old Glory" and conveyed to the receiving vault at Mount Olivet Cemetery where it lay until the morning of April 28, when it was taken, under military escort detailed from the Second Battalion, Corps of Engineers, Captain Michael J. McDonough, commanding, to the rotunda of the capitol, where it lay in state from nine until twelve o'clock.

On that day, L'Enfant, who drew the plans for our city, was honored by the nation he had served.

"Thousands who never heard the Frenchman's name, thousands who have praised the broad avenues of the Capital City, yet knew not whose hand designed them or in whose brain the scheme of the city was born, learned that the name of L'Enfant had been blazoned at the top of the roll on which are graven those illustrious names whose memory will last as long as the beautiful city with which they are linked."

The long years of obscurity and lack of appreciation which shrouded the fame of the Revolutionary hero and gifted architect, were rolled away in the Capitol Rotunda, as the Ambassador from France, the Vice-President of the United States and the President of the District Commissioners paid each his glowing tribute to him who may be truthfully called the Father of the City of Washington. And when the thousands had passed around the catafalque on which reposed the casket, draped in the American flag—patriotic men and women, school children who, perhaps, had never seen the name of L'Enfant on history's page—the great casket was lifted by eight sturdy sergeants of the Engineer Corps and borne to the caisson of an artillery gun, and the long-delayed triumphal march which should have been L'Enfant's nearly a century ago, was begun to Arlington.

L'Enfant's membership in the Cincinnati, for which society he designed the badge and the certificate, was

emphasized by two incidents. As the President of the United States entered the rotunda, the blue and silver banner of the society was raised and lowered. After the addresses in the rotunda, Senator A. O. Bacon, of Georgia, inquired of Chairman Macfarland whether any insignia or emblem of the society had been placed upon the casket. Mr. Macfarland replied that there had not been. Senator Bacon then took from the lapel of his coat the badge of the Cincinnati which he was wearing and handing it to Mr. Macfarland requested him to deposit it in the grave with the remains. This commission Chairman Macfarland executed just before the grave was closed.

The funeral procession was nearly a mile long and most impressive. The streets were lined with spectators, flags were displayed at half mast, and as the cortége passed the rooms of the Veteran Volunteer Firemen's Association, their bell tolled solemnly. Even this bell has had a varied history. Cast in 1856, for the Northern Liberties Fire Company, it sent out its grim warning until 1864, when the fire alarm went into service. The bell was then lent to Saint Theresa's Roman Catholic Church of Anacostia and for years called that congregation to prayer and praise. Finally in 1895, it was loaned to its present custodians and since then has paid its tribute of respect to many noted ones among the nation's dead.

In the National Cemetery at Arlington the grave was surrounded by the foremost men of the capital. With bowed heads and lowered eyes they stood while the Reverend William T. Russell, pastor of Saint Patrick's Church, celebrated the offices of the Church, assisted by James Maloney and Sheldon Fleishell as acolytes. Following the prayers, Father Russell made this brief address:

“The State represented by the highest officials of our country and of the District of Columbia having paid its tribute of respect and gratitude to the genius of L'Enfant it is meet that the Church of which he was a member during life should perform her last offices of affection for his memory and of supplication in behalf of his soul. Our national capital is enriched with monuments to the glorious memory of the heroic souls—Lafayette and Rochambeau—who contributed so generously to the achievement of our independence. Tardy have we been in acknowledging our debt of gratitude to him who planned, the ‘City Beautiful.’ But at length we have awakened to a sense of justice to him, and to the land which gave him birth. France—Catholic France—was our only ally, when we most needed friends. But for the ready financial aid with which Catholic France replenished our exhausted treasury, whereby our patriots were persuaded to keep the field, and but for the timely aid of Rochambeau and de Grasse—it may well be questioned how long our independence would have been deferred.

“This ceremony today reflects credit on the nation which thus speaks its gratitude, and honor on Catholic France and her heroes, who so rightly deserve it. L'Enfant needs no monument of marble or of bronze. The City Beautiful at his feet is the proudest and most endearing monument we can erect to his memory.

“But we come not to praise L'Enfant. He is beyond our power of praise. We come to pray for him, that his good works and our prayers may ascend to heaven as the odor of sweet incense before the throne of justice and mercy, and to bless his remains which we trust will rise to a glorious resurrection.

“May God grant to him who planned and dreamed the City Beautiful before us, an abode in the new Jerusalem the Celestial City Beautiful.”

A moment of absolute silence, then three volleys were fired by a detachment of the Engineer Corps and Principal Musician, George A. Wintermyer, of the

Engineer Band, sounded "taps"—a soldier's burial—a fitting climax to the long-delayed honor which that day was paid to L'Enfant.

Grant me a few minutes to recall some of the many glowing tributes paid to his genius and his faith in the glorious future of his adopted country. He "forecasted the future." He laid out a city for "fifty states instead of thirteen." He could "imagine things a century before they happened." Like many of his kind, he was "dead long before his dream came true." His "services were not for one generation merely, but for all time; neither were they for the United States alone; the whole world may enjoy the beauties of Washington and delight in its charms as one of the greatest national capitals." "That L'Enfant's mind evolved the general plan of the present Washington," said Vice-President Sherman, "seems beyond the possibility of dispute." There was no question regarding his "ability or his taste. These plans which are now universally praised, were laughed at, derided and set aside as being too expensive and too ambitious, at the time they were made; but it is to L'Enfant's adherence to his original idea and his belief in the future greatness of this country, that the beauty of this city is due." "To plan this city," said Ambassador Jusserand in his address, "Washington selected a French officer, whose qualities of character and faults of temper, he had for thirteen years many occasions to appreciate; gifted, plucky, energetic, but difficult to handle."

Without the aid and backing which the Columbia Historical Society gave and secured, the remains of L'Enfant would not rest in Arlington today. The suggestion of the use of the rotunda of the United States Capitol was made to your president some months ago

by two members of this Society, each unconscious until this reading, that the other had the same idea.

It was to Mrs. Madison A. Ballinger and to Mrs. Charles W. Richardson that the appropriateness of the use of the rotunda came. A bereavement in the family of Mrs. Richardson prevented her taking an active part, and it was to Mrs. Ballinger and her husband that we owe the largest part of the success of having secured the capitol for the funeral services. There were many who coöperated and did valiant work; perhaps the names of Messrs. S. C. Neale, W. W. Abell, M. M. Parker, Representative Samuel W. Smith, Senator Isador Rayner and Senator A. O. Bacon, stand out most prominently.

To but seven others had this honor of lying in state in the rotunda been accorded and each of the others was a native-born citizen:

Abraham Lincoln, April 19 to 21, 1865.

Thaddeus Stevens, August 13, 1868.

Salmon P. Chase, May —, 1873.

Charles Sumner, March —, 1874.

James A. Garfield, September 21 to 23, 1881.

John A. Logan, December 30, 1886.

William McKinley, September 17, 1901.

Pierre Charles L'Enfant, April 28, 1909.